

Generations United Resolutions for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging

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Resolution 1: Encourage and support quality intergenerational shared site programs through promoting the development of new programs and supporting existing programs such as co-located child and adult day cares, before and after school programs, long term care facilities and shared housing.

Background: Intergenerational shared sites are programs in which children, youth and older adults participate in ongoing services and/or programming concurrently at the same site. Some intergenerational program models are: senior centers with before and after school programs; housing for older adults and college students; and computer labs in senior housing facility used by children, youth and older adults. Intergenerational shared sites improve attitudes and enhance the quality of life for all participants while providing needed services to the community. Intergenerational shared sites also increase cost savings and create opportunities for the generations to come together.

Resolution 2: Promote civic engagement of baby boomers and older adults through intergenerational service by expanding existing volunteer and service programs and creating new opportunities to engage older adults.

Background: There will be twice as many Americans over the age of 65 by 2030 than there were in 1990. The aging population presents an opportunity for a large new resource. Communities that encourage civic engagement enable older adults to remain active in their communities as they age. Promoting civic engagement of older adults and youth creates an opportunity to transfer knowledge and experience to future generations. Civic engagement provides children, youth, and older adults with opportunities to remain engaged while contributing to society.

Resolution 3: Advance intergenerational strategies to engage all generations to meet community needs such as engaging older and younger individuals in education, mentoring and literacy programs, health and wellness activities, disaster prevention and preparedness, and internet and current technologies.

Background: In recent decades age segregation has grown partly due to increased mobility by workers, divorce, workplace demands, and fear of violence. Many have limited relationships with other people outside their own age group. By finding ways to connect the generations through intergenerational programs and policies, older and younger people will feel valued and better understand one another. The result is more productive engagement of people of all ages and the implementation of innovative, effective approaches to addressing community needs. Congress and administering agencies can promote this productive intergenerational engagement by using an intergenerational lens when framing policies. For example, Congress could include intergenerational language in policies and, when giving grants, administering agencies

could give priority to those groups that include an intergenerational strategy in their proposals. In a climate of limited resources, intergenerational strategies are vital to effectively meeting community needs.

Resolution 4: Support grandparents and other relatives raising children by providing federally funded subsidized guardianship options to enable them to meet the needs of the children in their care without compromising their own health and financial security.

Background: Across the nation more than 6 million children are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. By stepping in to raise their relative children when the children's parents are unable, these relative caregivers help keep families together while keeping children out of foster care. Many caregivers, however, are older and living on fixed incomes and were not expecting the additional expense of raising a child. Financial supports are needed to provide the resources necessary for grandparents and other relatives to provide for the basic needs of children who unexpectedly come into their care. Subsidized guardianship programs provide required resources so caregivers can raise their relative children outside of the foster care system without sacrificing their own well-being.

Resolution 5: Encourage the development of and increased support for comprehensive services for grandparents and other relatives raising children through the expansion of the National Family Caregiver Support Programs and/or the development of federally funded kinship navigator programs to help caregivers who face a variety of obstacles when they step forward to raise their relatives' children, often at great personal sacrifice. Recommended services include but are not limited to information and referral, respite care, specialized housing, physical and mental health supports, and supplemental services.

Background: In the U.S., there are more than 2.4 million grandparents who are primarily responsible for meeting the needs of their grandchildren when their parents are unable to care for them due to a variety of factors such as parental substance abuse, incarceration, HIV/AIDS, death, mental health problems, family violence, poverty, and even military deployment. By keeping children out of the formal foster care system, conservative estimates show that grandparents and other relatives save taxpayers more than \$6.5 billion dollars each year.¹ These caregivers take on this role often at great personal sacrifice and face a range of challenges related to securing basic services and provisions for the children in their care including difficulty accessing medical care and coverage, securing mental health services for the children; obtaining legal services; enrolling children in school and securing special education services; and securing appropriate housing. Supportive services are needed to help these caregivers to continue to provide safe and nurturing homes for these children without compromising their own health and financial security.

Resolution 6: Maintain a strong and solvent Social Security system that continues to meet its obligations for current and future beneficiaries, including the more than 30 percent who are under 65 and receive disability and/or survivor benefits.

Background: For more than 60 years Social Security has provided vital benefits to millions of Americans of all ages. Social Security is more than a retirement program. Social Security embodies an intergenerational compact that has met its obligations to beneficiaries of all ages. Nearly seven million Americans receive survivor benefits; of those, 1.4 million are children. Social Security's income protection extends across generations to workers and family members of workers who are retired, disabled or deceased. In strengthening Social Security it is essential to consider the needs of all ages that participate in the program and depend on its benefits.

ⁱ This figure was calculated based on the Federal share of the 2000 average monthly foster care maintenance payment, which was estimated at \$545 (2000 Green Book, Committee on ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives).